

Remarks
Ambassador James Zumwalt
Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation, Ceremony for the Opening of the
Serere None Exhibit
Governor of Thiès Office, March 3, 2016

(As prepared)

Asalamu Alekum!

Mr. Minister of Culture and Communication,

Mr. Governor of Thiès Region,

Mr. President of the Regional Council,

Mr. Prefect of Thiès Department,

Mr. Mayor of Thiès,

Mr. Military Zone Commander (or Ladies and Gentlemen representing the Security Authorities and Defense),

Representatives of the Serere None [s-é-r-è-r-n-ô-n] community,

Ladies and Gentlemen representing the customary and religious local authorities,

Mr. Director of the Museum of Thiès,

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear guests

Almost two and a half years ago, my predecessor, Ambassador Lukens joined some of you here to launch work on this wonderful project to preserve the rich culture of the Serere None community. I am very proud to join you today to mark the completion of this project.

The Serere None community consists of around 10,000 people, all of whom live in the Thiès area. The None language and musical traditions were on the brink of being lost forever. But, as we see from this wonderful performance today that, those traditions are alive and well.

I would like to thank the performers and the representatives of the Serere None community for their dedication and passion for sharing their culture with the wider community. Now, thanks to the hard work of our partners, we have a digital audio and video archive of these traditions for the enjoyment of the broader public and for researchers. More importantly, some of the community elders trained the next generation of musicians on how to make their traditional instruments.

By passing along these skills, the music comes to life, and becomes a source of income and pride for the next generation of Serere None artists.

This project was funded through the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation of the United States Embassy to Senegal. This fund was developed in 2001 to help preserve cultural sites, cultural objects, and forms of traditional cultural expression in countries like Senegal. With such a rich and diverse cultural history, Senegal has much to offer the world. By preserving and passing down cultural traditions from generation to generation,

Senegalese can celebrate their culture as a source of national pride. In addition, to the Serere None project, the Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation has funded other facets of Senegal's heritage. For example, in 2007 the fund assisted an exhibit highlighting the important role of women's history in Senegal. The fund has also supported the preservation of photographs and documents for the Leopold Sedar Senghor museum and updated display and storage of African art at Museum of Theodore Monod, in Dakar.

I would like to thank the Thiès Museum and the Serere None community leaders for their hard work and dedication in completing this project successfully. The legacy you leave here will help future generations know their culture and themselves. I am honored that we at the U.S. Embassy were able to be part of this project.

Dieureudieuf!